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ABSTRACT

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THE KNOWLEDGE THAT TEACHERS VALUE:
FINDINGS FROM A CASE STUDY

Nancy Van Note Chism

Paper presented at the Annual Meeting
of the American Educational Research Association
Chicago April, 1985

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The Knowledge That Teachers Value:
Findings from a Case Study

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This paper draws on data from a larger case study of teacher development to identify what knowledge teachers value most highly in their professional development. The study found that teachers appraise the sources of knowledge available to them through formal, informal, and personal means according to three main criteria: relevance, capacity for involving active engagement, and utility. In general, the teachers found that formal inservice education was less likely than informal collegial exchange or private inquiry to offer opportunities for knowledge that met these criteria. Across the teachers, however, there existed variation in motivation, locus of control, and capacity to process and apply knowledge that influenced the strictness with which individual teachers applied the criteria to assess prospective opportunities for learning. The study concludes that staff developers who respect the criteria that teachers hold for judging the value of knowledge and who assume that it is a professional function of the teacher to create as well as use knowledge are likely to be highly effective in fostering teacher growth.

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The adults who work in schools carry around with them extraordinary insights about curriculum, staff development, community relations, integration, leadership--about most anything. For us, the issue then is not whether school people know much of value, but under what conditions they will reveal this rich knowledge of their craft so that it may become part of the discussion.

Roland Barth (1984)

"When you get out of school," said a teacher from the elementary school where I did a case study, "you don't know how to teach. You don't know anything about teaching--not one thing except what you did student teaching." Over the course of the year at the school, the other teachers made similar comments, and although with more reflection, they would often modify these comments to acknowledge some of the theoretical and craft knowledge that they brought with them to their first teaching situation, the teachers were emphatic in maintaining that the development of the knowledge that they value most occurs primarily on the job. Their comments lent support to the belief that when we are talking about the professional learning of teachers, we need to look very carefully at how and what they learn, not only at the college or university, but also on the job. Through conducting a case study (Chism, 1984) of conditions for teacher learning in an elementary school setting, then, I sought to understand how teachers felt they develop professionally in the course of their practice and to explore the conditions that either foster or discourage this growth in an actual setting.

Based on a review of the literature on teacher development conducted simultaneously with my early field experiences in the setting, I posited that an ideal learning environment for teachers would be characterized by a positive growth ethic (which Little, 1981, refers to as a "norm of

continuous improvement"); responsiveness to the varying needs and capacities of teachers as learners (McNergney & Carrier, 1981; DeVaney, 1977); challenge and stimulus to grow (Harris, 1980; Sprinthall & Thies-Sprinthall, 1980); leadership and psychological and technical support (Bussis, Chittenden, & Amarel, 1976); meaningful peer interaction (Little's "norm of collegiality"); frequent feedback (Schon, 1983); opportunities for experimentation and reflection (Haberman, 1980; Jackson, 1971); and time (Barnes & Putnam, 1981). My intent in the study was to understand the relative importance of these eight conditions for teacher learning in an actual school setting and to document their presence or absence in that setting. In this paper, I will consider what the data gathered for that study say about the knowledge that is of most value to teachers.

METHODS

Because I was interested in portraying ordinary conditions for teacher learning, I chose as the site for the study an elementary school in a large urban district that had no special reputation, positive or negative, for staff development. Riverside (a pseudonym) was characterized by a district administrator as a place that "does school"--by which she seemed to mean a school that operates in a rather

conventional and uninspired way. I found this description accurate. Textbooks, dittos, seatwork, desks in rows, and canned holiday art are the mainstays of the Riverside routine. The principal devotes his time to administrative details while the majority of the teachers try to maintain traditional arrangements for schooling in their isolated classrooms. I came to describe the atmosphere for staff development as "laissez-faire": those teachers who are intent on continuing their growth take advantage of opportunities to do so and surmount constraints in their way, while less internally-motivated teachers maintain a holding pattern.

To gather data for the study, I spent one or two days each week at the school over the course of an entire school year, observing and interviewing teachers and reviewing the documents that pertained to the inservice learning of the sixteen teachers who were a part of my study. I recorded data in field notes and on audiotape, coded and arranged it into displays ordered by a flexible initial category system, and analyzed these by theme (Tesch, 1980). I used such devices as member checks, triangulation, and peer debriefing (Guba, 1981) to establish trustworthiness during data collection and analysis.

Although my focus in the case study was on organizational conditions influencing teacher learning, the question of what knowledge is of most worth for teachers was integrally

related. As I spoke with the teachers at Riverside and observed their daily lives in school, I developed an understanding of their attitudes toward knowledge, an understanding that was supported by the data, which I reanalyzed for this paper to concentrate more specifically on the question at issue.

THE RIVERSIDE TEACHERS AND KNOWLEDGE

In their comments, the teachers at Riverside distinguish between three main types of professional learning situations that occur for them: formal opportunities, such as inservice workshops and university coursework; their own personal, private pursuit of knowledge in the classroom; and informal opportunities for them to learn collectively through collegial interaction. Despite the diversity that I found among the teachers in the amount of interest and effort they display in pursuing knowledge, analysis of their comments and actions on valued knowledge reveals that there is a common set of criteria that they apply in appraising the sources of knowledge available to them. Specifically, the teachers judge them according to three main criteria that will be discussed below. These include relevance, capacity for involving active engagement, and utility.

RELEVANCE

A main theme running through the comments of the teachers at Riverside is that they evaluate opportunities for development in terms of relevance to the actual problems and issues they face in their everyday teaching. Optional inservice workshops are generally avoided, then, because they fail to meet this criterion. One teacher said, "They are always giving you the answers to questions you never had, talking about things that you never wondered about." When considering a workshop or one of the other opportunities available to them through the university, art museum, or other organizations, the teachers at Riverside often look for offerings that are very relevant to their own grade-level or subject-matter concerns:

If it's on your level, then I find most of it interesting. People on your level sharing or here is a math idea for your level. . . . I would much prefer that than to sit and listen to a lot of other stuff.

I like academic things. For inservice, I like specific things like that where you are dealing with ways to teach better and so on rather than just something like burnout. . . . I think it needs to be of value. Everybody always seems to respond to anything that has something to do with reading or math. They seem less resentful of going to it if it is something they can use.

Across the teaching staff, however, there are varying requirements for how immediately practical a learning

opportunity needs to be in order to be valued. A few teachers view their own role as crucial in determining the success of formal learning situations. One spoke, for example, about how she views university courses, which are generally labeled very useless by others:

You have to learn to take the concept and apply the concept. . . . There are ways to work the university, but not to take it as gospel. And I think that that's the thing that people set themselves up for. They say, "This is going to solve all my problems." It's not going to solve your problems. You have to.

The teachers exercise control over their learning through practicing selectivity in choosing university courses or inservice offered at the district level. They make direct attempts to find out what is available and sometimes even shape it to their needs. One teacher helped to change a course on limited English-speaking students to make it more relevant to her needs and those of the other teachers in the course.

Often, these particular teachers are seeking broader theoretical frameworks for their practice, such as the teacher who continually pursues coursework in language development theory to provide a unifying rationale for practices ranging from her teaching methods in spelling to the way in which she arranges the seating pattern in her classroom.

The majority of the teachers, however, hold a stricter interpretation of relevance. Many define relevance very narrowly, such as the teacher who said, "I have no affinity for problems [of other grade levels] and I don't expect [other] teachers to have any affinity for mine." Districtwide offerings and university coursework are therefore usually faulted as not being relevant to individual needs.

Moreover, the willingness or capacity of those who provide formal learning opportunities to root them in teacher-generated questions and needs is seriously suspect at Riverside. When asked if inservice is ever built around a question that teachers want to explore, one teacher replied, "I think it is safe to say that we are not invited to explore." Many view formal opportunities for learning, both required and voluntary, as the indoctrination of teachers by the decision makers at the district level. One teacher said:

Strangely enough, [inservice] seems to happen just when they are pushing something new. . . . There is inservice for those things that are being promoted by someone who has authority to promote it. And if there is no one who has the authority or responsibility to push something, there is no inservice for that. I don't know of any voluntary inservice. It is usually something you are assigned to do.

In keeping with her observation, the required inservice sessions during the year were all devoted to implementing a district-level program. With a bit of tired humor, the

teacher concluded, "When they started closing schools, they had all these surplus administrators and they had to do something with them, so they put them in charge of developing programs for us. They are keeping us entertained."

In lieu of formal opportunities for learning, then, the teachers turn to self-directed activities to pursue their questions and meet their needs. They say repeatedly that they rely on personal inquiry, interchanges with their colleagues, and printed material for their day-to-day learning. Once again, they approach this kind of private learning in different ways. For many teachers, such inquiry takes place only in the case of very particular problems and only under troublesome conditions. For others, instances of private inquiry are stimulated often by classroom activities and experiences. One teacher spoke, for example, of lying awake in bed at night reviewing her day and trying to think of new ways to involve reluctant children and explain renaming; another tells of reflecting during her planning on how an experiment with a counting game could be modified to work better. Often, the teachers at Riverside describe this activity as "trial and error" learning, a form of knowledge that is generated as they experiment and reflect on practice. In keeping with the experiential nature of this kind of knowledge, it arises from occasions that are directly relevant to practice. The teachers trust this knowledge and place a

great deal of importance on it.

In addition to private experiential knowledge, the teachers at Riverside speak of a form of collective learning that is similarly valued for its grounding in highly relevant issues. Very early on in the course of the case study, the teachers began alluding to grade level meetings that occurred during the previous year when a cadet (intern) principal was present at Riverside. Teachers universally felt that such meetings centered on problems and issues that arose directly from practice, and that, in exploring solutions in common, they not only were encouraged to grapple with these problems personally but they also broadened their knowledge bases through listening to the ideas of others. The unanimity of the teachers on this point is striking: every teacher testified to the high interest level and effectiveness of the grade-level meetings. With the departure of the cadet principal, however, organized collective opportunities of this sort did not continue. Talk of practice among the teachers became casual and infrequent.

Although the teachers at Riverside value learning opportunities that they feel relate directly to their immediate questions and concerns, the teachers indicate through their examples that sometimes they can be "hooked" through the efforts of another on a question that they did not originally pose. They recalled that sometimes, the leader of

an inservice session seemed to have a special talent or charisma that engaged their interest: "We couldn't believe they were paying us to listen to her. We stayed right through lunch." Others, by virtue of their demonstrated knowledge of classroom situations, could also enable teachers to see the relevance of the kind of knowledge they offered: "It was like she had used these things and knew what worked." In this respect, the cadet principal excelled as a facilitator of learning in group sessions. Her unquestioned familiarity and prowess in classroom situations enabled her to establish the relevance of the issues discussed at the group meeting as well as to act as a helpful source of advice.

In summary, the teachers at Riverside place a high value on knowledge that is relevant to their classroom practice. For some teachers, the connection must be very close. Others are more willing to draw connections themselves. Occasionally, particularly dynamic speakers or respected practitioners can help to make the connection. In most cases, however, the teachers at Riverside do not find that formal inservice opportunities are likely to provide them with knowledge that meets their criterion for relevance. They rely more on private and collegial experience for relevant knowledge.

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ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT

A second criteria that the teachers at Riverside apply to judge the worth of learning situations is the opportunity for active engagement. They value those formal learning situations that call upon them to take an active role, such as simulations and role playing, make-it-take-it workshops, exchanges of craft knowledge, and sharing of idea books and prepared dittos. Several teachers alluded to engagement that resulted from taking on the perspective of another. One effective inservice recalled by teachers was led by the Riverside guidance counselor, who used simulation exercises to enable the teachers to empathize with learning-disabled students, an experience that several cited as influential on their subsequent teaching. Similarly, one teacher who several years back had attended a workshop where she had had to view classroom work from a student perspective felt that the experience had been a powerful and lasting one.

Once again, there is a range of intensity across the teachers on the criterion. A few teachers seem to generate their own engagement. They are eager to question, to explore, and to speculate under most circumstances. In group sessions, these teachers are most likely to speak, often contributing thoughts, disagreeing, or interrupting to create interaction. Formal constraints on their learning and actions are hurdles

that they clear quite gracefully. They know how to get around district regulations for released time to participate in learning, where to find the best opportunities, and how to obtain the freedom they need to conduct their practice in accord with the knowledge they have.

The majority of the teachers, however, take a fairly passive overall stance toward knowledge. They view themselves as governed by a bounded autonomy: major decisions on curriculum and instruction are made at the district level; their role is the technical one of finding a workable way to follow the course of study and the manuals of mandated textbooks and the districtwide competency program and to comply with other stipulated responsibilities. At the mandatory inservice connected with the use of the new reading series, for example, the teachers participated by listening and taking notes, asking only for clarification: should ink or pencil be used on the permanent records? should the worksheets be letter graded? The resource person in this situation acted as the transmitter of direct procedures; the teachers as passive recipients of knowledge.

Within the domain that they consider their own, however, the teachers are far more active about their own learning. They thus value knowledge that they obtain through working through problems, through considering alternatives, and judging consequences. They are impatient with situations in

which they cannot be active. Often, they show this by grading papers and cutting out bulletin board letters while attending a required meeting.

Although the Riverside teachers speak of having attended occasional inservice meetings that met their criteria for active engagement, they claim that most have not. The usual inservice is portrayed as a situation in which the teachers are expected to be passive recipients of expert knowledge. The teachers put most university coursework in this category as well as voluntary inservice sessions offered by the district:

You go and you sit and listen to someone's wonderful ideas on what you could be doing. And it's so out of touch and so boring, you have to work at staying awake. But you are expected to sit and act interested even though you know this person has nothing to offer you. You get real itchy.

The need for active engagement seems intricately connected with the question of power. Although the teachers feel that they should play a receptive role in inservice situations on district mandates when they perceive the authority figure as legitimate, they do not like to be passive in areas that they perceive are rightly within their domain. Occasionally, when the teachers feel that district inservice sessions violate common understandings about domains of authority, their active engagement is aroused somewhat

inadvertently. Early in the year at Riverside, for example, district instructions on the pacing of pre-reading for kindergarten children caused a great flurry of activity among kindergarten teachers, who were forced to examine and articulate their views on reading instruction and readiness throughout the course of the year. Most of the time, however, protest takes a more subtle form. Many teachers at Riverside admit to harboring a latent resentment. One teacher said, "A lot of them [inservice workshop leaders] kind of unintentionally come off insulting your intelligence. Like they are talking down to you." Referring to the submissive behavior and lack of interchange at most inservices, one teacher focused on the lack of communication. "I wonder," she asked, "if they are getting a true picture of how their ideas are accepted. I think they are not."

Even among the few teachers who question power relationships more aggressively and reject the technician image in favor of more professional discretion and power, passive behavior in formal inservices is generally preferred. Often, they maintain, confrontation is not the strategy of choice, since the power assumptions of the situation create the need for the leader to preserve an appearance of authority:

I avoid confrontation because I know that they think they are superior. Contradicting them would--well, there is just no quiet way to do it

in these situations. It's best to approach them in private later if you can, but you usually don't have the chance.

Most of the time, she says, "I'll just keep quiet and not say that that's the only way to go. . . . I'll say okay and just quietly do my own thing."

In most situations, both teachers who prefer a technical role and teachers who assume more autonomy look to learning situations in which a collegial rather than differentiated arrangement affords them more opportunity to play an active role in the learning. The Riverside teachers cite the grade level meetings held under the leadership of the cadet principal during the previous year as particularly effective. The power assumptions encouraged active engagement: "She [the cadet] made me feel good. Made me feel like I was worth something at the end of the day. She didn't dictate. She asked your advice, your input." A teacher commented that the "commitment to prepare and to participate made you really involved in what was going on and you got a lot out of it." A third said, "It wasn't at all like usual where all you were wishing is that you could go home."

Similarly, another teacher, referring to her experiences as a reading teacher in another district, singled out as exemplary a facilitator who took a similar stance: "He saw it as his role just to get things going for the reading teachers." The sessions followed a simple format that was

rated highly by the teacher:

We met every Wednesday afternoon and we studied different reading programs. We studied different techniques. We worked together. . . . We each took topics and we presented things to each other and so we had to do the research. We got to be a very close-knit group and we were all equal partners.

We would show our ideas that worked. Like one time, we went over different techniques for teaching reading. And it was like you would just go through books and different things and make up some stuff of your own and you would brainstorm on that and present that. Those sessions gave me ideas that I'm still using all along.

In the absence of such scheduled events for collegial learning during the year under study, the teachers at Riverside relied solely on informal peer interaction and private experimentation as learning situations that entailed active engagement. The extent to which each teacher valued these activities and the types of knowledge each sought once again varied.

A few teachers at Riverside take comfort in stability and isolate themselves from situations in which they would be called upon to examine beliefs or seek new practices. For the most part, they avoid interchange, like the teacher who said, "I don't talk about teaching with other teachers. I don't give them the chance. I don't talk shop." These teachers avoid reflecting on classroom experience in favor of coping. "When I go home in the evening, school is left behind," said one

teacher. Another agreed, "The day's over. I try not to think about it. It would drive you crazy."

The majority of the Riverside teachers are more responsive to peer interaction and occasions for classroom inquiry. Many find only discussions of very specific matters and practical questions engaging, whereas a few are more curious about more abstract or theoretical issues such as theories of language development in children. In both cases, these teachers place a very high value on the knowledge that they gain through direct interaction with peers: "I get more out of my colleagues and I getting together to discuss things than I do anything else." These teachers place a similar value on their private inquiry as well, claiming that their continual active engagement with real learning situations is the means for the steady acquisition of knowledge about teaching. "Teaching," says one teacher, "is something you learn by doing. . . by watching, observing, communicating, that's about all. Trial and error. If this doesn't work, you try something else. Teaching--it's experience." Another says, "I think I learned to teach when I got in there. I had to learn by doing. I still do."

There are significant differences among the teachers in the amount of reflection that they bring to bear on these questions of classroom practice. For some, the trial and error is rather unplanned and the resulting knowledge is at a

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low level of consciousness: "Oh, I don't know, I just keep rummaging around in my bag of tricks until something works. It may work next year and then again, it may not. It keeps changing and you never know. I try things until something works." Another teacher said, "[Another teacher] asked me how I do discipline. Well, I don't know. It just comes automatically." Other teachers are more systematic:

My approach to spelling has really changed in the past three years. I've already rejected [several methods]. I guess I keep building on what I learned from past wild goose chases. I think now I have more a sense of why something won't work, not just that it doesn't. I know this--it's a lot more complicated than I originally thought.

A second criterion that the teachers at Riverside hold for the production of valued knowledge, then, is active engagement. Although there are differences in perceptions of locus of control among the teachers, within the spheres that they deem their own, the teachers express a preference for learning through active engagement with problems and issues that arise from practice. They find that they are more likely to experience this active engagement in collegial and individual situations, rather than in formal inservice situations or university classes where a differentiated authority structure exists.

UTILITY

In addition to valuing knowledge that is relevant to their situations and that entails their active participation, the teachers at Riverside value knowledge that has clear implications for action. The importance that they place on the knowledge that they gain from classroom experience is clearly related to its capacity to provide them with cues as to what to do in their ongoing work. One teacher said, "You know, I'm not out there in the stands. I'm in there pitching."

For many, then, speculative discussions are not valued: "I've been in classes where they hash the stuff over and it's just an exercise in semantics and nothing was changed. You come in the door, you go out the door an hour later and nothing has changed. No one's opinion was changed. So why bother? As far as how you teach better, you don't have a clue." A dialogue between teachers on the subject of professional journals reveals a similar emphasis:

Ms. S: I think a lot of that stuff in journals is pure theory and when you try to figure out what it means for you, how you should teach, you come up short. They aren't interested in that. They play with ideas and that's all. I think that the thing that is most important is the experience of your colleagues and your own experience.

Ms. L: Yeah, I think that most people have looked at the journals at the beginning and over

the years have slowly tossed them out. I think everybody has looked at them and not seen anything helpful so you start slowly getting away from them.

Ms. S: Getting down to practical matters [is important].

Ms. L: And you rely more on seeing somebody who is having success. If you really want to know about something, you'll seek out the successful person. Then you get ideas on what to try.

As with the value placed on relevance, however, the teachers at Riverside vary considerably in their ability or inclination to derive implications for action. Most of the teachers seek clear steps to follow rather than global discussions. Those who read professional material, for example, favor magazines with ideas for bulletin boards, games for teaching consonant blends, and the like. Several teachers who are adamant about the general uselessness of university courses nevertheless lamented that the supply of student teachers had dried up, ending for them a steady stream of new ideas. The value is placed on the application rather than the principle.

The few teachers with a stronger internal drive do not differ in their need for knowledge to have classroom implications, but are willing to play a much more active role in constructing the link between general ideas and particular applications. Though like the other teachers in believing that use is the acid test of an idea, they display a greater

tendency to derive implications: "I'm a reader. Always have been. I read everything from philosophy to cereal boxes. And I say, 'What does this stuff mean for me? How can I use it?' And so I get ideas from all over." They also are more patient about the potential utility of information: "All of it--my coursework, my reading, my other activities--it's all geared to this kind of child. I know that if I just keep looking at this from a lot of angles, listening to anyone who has something to contribute, I'll put it together and be a much better teacher."

In seeking opportunities for learning that are likely to offer clear suggestions for use, most of the teachers at Riverside gravitate toward offerings characterized by what DeVaney (1977) calls "concreteness." Although few pursue voluntary inservice sessions (during the course of the year, only one teacher went to a voluntary inservice workshop), favorable recollections are once more associated with workshops at which the teachers made or learned to make a classroom product, learned how to administer a test or use a given set of materials, or participated in a program that offered them specific steps for follow-up. The most popular university course for all but the two teachers who are pursuing advanced degrees is on the zoo as a teaching resource.

The teachers' criterion for utility is in accord with the value that they place on classroom experimentation as a means toward knowledge. If the implications of an inservice offering are not clear for them, there is an uncomfortable uncertainty about how the idea might be tested. The preference for actual use as a way of learning is strong. The teachers' comments on their experimentation with the new reading series adopted by the district illustrate this:

With this new reading series--any year they adopt a new reading series--you can't really evaluate it until you see how the children work with it and how you work with it.

I'll know how to use it better next year. You can read the manual in the summer, but it doesn't mean anything until you use it.

It's only after using something like that for a while that you get to know what your questions and comments are.

In lieu of formal opportunities that do not offer them implications for testable knowledge, then, the teachers rely heavily on other sources for ideas. Some favor very proximate sources, such as family or their own elementary school experiences. Others say they have incorporated ideas from the many kinds of experiences and interactions they have had in the past in different roles or in different places. Some say that they rely on their own personal creativity to generate ideas that can be tested. All, however, are left cold by information, ideas, or activities that do not seem to offer

classroom applications.

In this respect, the grade level meetings held during the previous year were once again cited as meeting a criterion for valued learning. The teachers related that following the general discussion, the cadet principal asked the teachers to formulate an "action plan," a statement that mapped out their ideas on how to proceed between meetings. Implications of the discussion that had taken place were thus articulated. For many, the action plan provided the closure and guidance they needed at the end of a session. Follow-up by the cadet principal between meetings reinforced the action plan and generated needed adjustments.

Utility, then, is the third criterion that the Riverside teachers apply to judge the value of knowledge. Some teachers seem to be able to assess the implications of an idea and its utility more readily than others, but all rely on classroom tests as an integral part of their learning. Although the teachers report that they obtain ideas that they use in their classroom experimentation from many sources, they view these as tentative until they have been used and assessed. Their preference, then, is for sources that offer information or ideas that have clear implications for classroom practice.

DISCUSSION

Although the study documents the wide diversity of ways in which the Riverside teachers approach learning and acting within the school setting, the most striking finding of this study is that despite these differences the teachers share a common set of criteria that they use in assessing the worth of knowledge. It can readily be seen that these criteria can be used as general guides by those who are responsible for facilitating teacher development, yet the range of teacher preferences suggests that there are no magic formulas. Such differences among teachers have long been noted by stage theorists such as Fuller and Bown (1975), who suggest that teacher education, both at the preservice and inservice levels, has to accommodate varying needs and abilities. This is the central theme of many approaches to staff development such as that of McNergney and Carrier (1981). University coursework is likely to provide valued knowledge for some but not others. Make-it-take-it workshops will meet the criteria of many teachers but not those who are seeking an overall rationale for practice.

A central consideration, however, arises when we think of the distinction between the kinds of knowledge that teachers value and the kind of knowledge that we might think they ought to value. Both Garman (1984) and Carr & Kemmis (1983), for

example, offer a taxonomy of teacher knowledge that proceeds from lower to higher levels of conscious reflection. Stage theorists make similar distinctions. At the lower end of these taxonomies is the craft knowledge that is so highly valued by many of the Riverside teachers. To many teachers, this knowledge offers a practical, time-tested way of operating, yet observers are bothered by its many unexamined assumptions. Feiman-Nemser and Buchmann (1983), for example, speak of the "pitfalls" of relying on experience.

In many commentaries, there is an implied dissatisfaction with teacher knowledge that is unexamined, unsystematic, and unarticulated. There are differences of opinion, however, in how to go about changing this state of affairs. Some suggest that we continue to deliver recipes (but "enlightened" ones) to teachers because that is what they want and all that they can handle, given the structural arrangements of schooling. Others are in favor of exploiting charismatic ways of delivering information to bring about this enlightenment. Still others would tighten the authority structure or circumstances of teaching in order to bring teacher behavior in line with established expert knowledge.

Those who advance the professionalization of teaching, however, suggest that teachers, rather than acting merely as the "utilizers" of knowledge generated by others, play a central role in knowledge generation. "It is often

forgotten," reminds Griffin (1983), "that almost all of what the researchers specify as effective teaching was invented by teachers and only discovered by researchers." Those espousing this position clearly take a different approach to the development of teachers' knowledge. The emphasis is on the capacity of the teacher to generate knowledge rather than on importing knowledge as a finished product into schools. Yet the thrust is developmental: rather than accepting differences in knowledge preferences of teachers as givens, the aim is to bring teacher-generated knowledge to a level of consciousness that permits critical examination, articulation, and ultimately, empowerment. Carr & Kemmis (1983) and Sanders & McCutcheon (1984) urge teachers to explore more systematically through action research. Garman (1984) speaks of stimulating teacher inquiry through clinical supervision.

In the case of Riverside, this kind of activity occurred for a brief but memorable time. Clearly, the teachers at Riverside felt that they had had exceptional experiences in learning during the previous year when the cadet principal was present. Without prompting, every teacher referred to the year during the course of informal or formal interviewing. They used phrases like "something that only comes along once in a while" and "a terrific change of pace" to describe the year. Although the teachers attributed the success of that year to the particular quality of the leadership displayed by

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the cadet principal, analysis of her approach reveals that it met the criteria for valued knowledge held by the teachers while at the same time displaying a strong developmental component.

A very practical, experienced, and effective teacher, the cadet principal relied on her demonstrated expertise in such situations as bringing order to the lunchroom to command esteem. Rather than using this esteem to shape the school to her preference, however, she chose to use it to establish an ethos of improvement and professional growth. By structuring in the time and occasion for teachers to meet and work together to examine issues directly arising from their situations, she encouraged both the more and less reflective teachers to engage in professional learning that was rooted in problems and issues arising directly from their practice, that commanded a high degree of engagement, and that resulted in plans for action. By focusing the development efforts primarily on groups, she allowed for the natural interchange of more and less reflective teachers, encouraging some extension on the part of the less reflective and providing the more reflective with the important opportunity to articulate and share their emerging knowledge. A firm opponent of what she referred to as "inservice because it's good for you." the cadet paid close attention to the capacity that teachers have to generate knowledge rather than assuming that they would

only utilize knowledge generated by others. Her respect for the criteria that the teachers at Riverside held for valued knowledge, coupled with her developmental expertise, allowed her to meet individual needs and preferences for knowledge and to encourage growth at the same time.

The particular approach used by the cadet principal worked for Riverside and probably would work in many schools. What the case seems to illustrate, however, is not that her approach was unique or the only effective approach possible, but that it enjoyed a large measure of success because it respected teachers' criteria for valued knowledge, assumed that it is a professional function of the teacher to create as well as use knowledge, and fostered the continued development of teachers in the ways in which they both use and generate knowledge.

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